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THE POLICE'S STEWART COPELAND MAKES OWN FILM; SAYS BAND WILL REUNITE
BY FRANK SPOTNITZ
NEW YORK

Stewart Copeland, the sole American in the platinum-selling rock group the Police, isn't interested in screaming fans, magazine covers, popping flashbulbs, or making millions. In fact, he's puzzled by it all.

'Lawyers, doctors and interior decorators, you can understand why society rewards them for what they do. But somebody who bangs things in rhythm, it's a little bit harder to work out,' the lanky blonde said.

Copeland's musings on his happy predicament, rising from the son of a CIA agent stationed in Beirut to become a wealthy drummer in one of the world's most popular rock bands, led him to the subject of "rhythmatism," which is not surprisingly the study of rhythm.

'Rhythm and music are very important in subtle ways,' he said.

His fascination with how rhythms coincide, not just in music but in the pumping of an engine piston or the pulse of an electrical current, is the focus of Copeland's latest project, a film called 'The Rhythmatist' in which he stars.

Shot in Africa, often with tribes never before exposed to Western culture, the home video is intended to be a 'video LP,' with a plot so loose and music and pictures so interesting that it can be played over and over like a record.

Copeland, 33, is not the first member of the Police to have dabbled in film. Each member of the band has become a multimedia artist between albums.

Striking lead singer Sting has been in several movies, including 'Dune' and the upcoming 'The Bride,' and recently released an excellent solo album, 'The Dream of the Blue Turtles,' collaborating with several top jazz musicians.

Police guitarist Andy Summers, meanwhile, has kept busy with a book of photography and two albums with guitarist Robert Fripp.

In addition to 'The Rhythmatist,' Copeland penned the score for Francis Coppola's 'Rumblefish' and, more recently, wrote music for a 60-piece

orchestra and composed songs for two Lucasfilm cartoon series based on 'Star Wars' characters the Ewoks and the droids.

A soundtrack for 'The Rhythmatist' is soon to be released, along with a music video and a single. The heavily percussive music for the film is, to say the least, unusual.

'It's in a foreign language for a start,' Copeland said. 'And there's no recognizable connection with the mainstream of modern music, which was the whole point. I wasn't out to do the mainstream, modern music in Africa. I was out there to do new stuff.'

End

The Police have always forged their own path, thanks in large part to Copeland, who conceived of a rock 'n' roll band 'that would be a three-piece unit that you could fit in a taxi and would be independent of everything.'

Its simplicity, and reggae-flavored rock music, made the band an unusual component of the punk-New Wave movement in the late '70s.

The Police shunned the industry's 'dinosaurs,' turning down opportunities to open for big acts like Alice Cooper, and refused record company extravaganzas until they themselves could afford them. They didn't have to wait long.

Their first album yielded a Top 40 hit, 'Roxanne,' in 1979, and each of the four albums since then has been even more successful. Their last LP, 1983's 'Synchronicity,' produced four Top 20 hits, including the stunning chart-topper, 'Every Breath You Take.'

It's been two years, and Copeland expects it will be at least a year before the band starts work on another LP. But he insists there will be another Police album.

'There's only three of us and if we did nothing but work with the other members of the group, we'd use each other up. So it's very important for us to get out and to rub up against other talents and other art forms even, so that when we come back into the group, we bring something new,' he said.

Copeland immodestly considers the Police the world's best rock group, but said all three members of the band know they're capable of making 'an LP that's average. It's very possible and we're concerned that it doesn't happen. It's real important to us to really be good.'

Although he is an American citizen, shortly after his birth Copeland's family moved to Beirut, where his CIA-employed father was stationed. He was 18 before he set foot on American soil again to study at Berkeley and he now lives in London.

His political leanings are conservative, which helps explain why Sting's liberal viewpoints are clearer on his solo album than on any Police record. 'He's got to hone his arguments with me,' Copeland said.

He said he will see a Sting concert this summer and may even organize some favorite musicians for a tour of his own, although 'basically I'm spoiled. I like my group.'